



## Report of the Zero Waste Committee to 2024 Arlington Town Meeting

The Zero Waste Committee (a.k.a. Zero Waste Arlington's) mission is to foster greater participation in all forms of waste reduction to improve health and restore the environment. We continued our work through 2023, and would like to thank our volunteer members

**Advisor: Charlotte Milan**

Larry Slotnick (Co-chair)  
Jim Ballin      Margie Bell

Priya Sankalia (Co-chair)  
Emily Dertz      Sarah Kmetz

Jennifer Campbell  
Paul Goldberg

Amy Speare  
Scott Mullen

### SUMMARY

1. **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Resolution:** Passage of EPR and Bottle Bill Legislation Resolution in May 2023 at Arlington Town Meeting
2. **Single Use Waste Reduced at Town Day:** ZWA made a big impact at Town Day 2023 with a free reusable takeout container pilot, and free drinking water truck coordinated with the MWRA (Massachusetts Water Resources Authority.)
3. **Plastics Reduction Subcommittee:** Formed to focus on reducing single use plastics in Arlington.
  - a. Works collaboratively with the town to support the installation and promotion of public water refill stations in town, and with restaurants to provide free tap water, as part of the [Arlington On Tap](#) campaign.
4. **Legislative Subcommittee:** Keeps track of bills in the MA state legislature and updates the committee on their status. This subcommittee brought the [Producer Responsibility Resolution](#) to the 2023 Town Meeting.
5. **Outreach & Education:** The core work of ZWA - we have continued to make great strides with our
  - a. Restaurant outreach - partnering with restaurants to reduce waste
  - b. Website [zerowastearlington.org](https://zerowastearlington.org) (launched in July 2022) which is updated on a regular basis with blog posts and updates on events.
  - c. [Facebook Page](#) and Google group that gets regular posts and updates
  - d. Tabling and sponsorships at community events like Town Day, EcoFest, Resources and Connections Fair, and the Heights Spring Fling Festival

**Join the efforts of Zero Waste Arlington!**

**We meet at 7:00 PM on the 3rd Thursday of every month at 51 Grove St.**

**Check out our website - [zerowastearlington.org](https://zerowastearlington.org)**

**Follow us on Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/zerowastearlington/>**

**Email [zerowastearlington@gmail.com](mailto:zerowastearlington@gmail.com) to be added to the ZWA Google Group**

## Single Use Waste Reduced at Town Day

Zero Waste Arlington introduced two new waste reduction efforts at Town Day 2023: the MWRA drinking water truck, and the 'Reduce Single-Use' reusable takeout container pilot program.

Both programs were a resounding success, removing the following from the waste stream:

- 500+ single-use beverage bottles
- 110+ single-use takeout containers
- 1 barrel of compost

The 'Reduce Single-Use' takeout container pilot program offered Town Day diners a choice of receiving their takeout meal in a reusable container rather than a disposable single-use container. Six town day food vendors participated in the program, including Pie Palace & Man Made Chili (from the [First Parish UU Church](#)), [Punjab](#), [Thrive Juice Cafe](#), [Fattoush](#) and [Acitron](#).

Over 110 meals were served in bright green and tan reusable containers that were collected at Town Day to be sanitized and used at future town events. This reusable takeout model is currently used by [Roasted Granola](#) through a partnership with [Recirclable](#), an Arlington based business.



The MWRA water truck offered residents the chance to refill their reusable water bottle, use (and keep) a sanitized water bottle provided by the Swap Shed, or quench their thirst with reusable 16oz cups provided by ZWA. On the cool, misty day, over 500 residents filled up. We can only imagine how many more people would have stopped by if it was a typical hot and sunny Town Day.



We appreciate the Town Day Committee's partnership in reducing single-use waste in our community. Thanks to the following local businesses who provided support for this pilot: [The Roasted Granola](#), [Yes! Your Eco Source](#), [Food Link](#), [Black Earth](#), [Arlington Swap Shed](#) and [Recirclable](#). We are gathering feedback from both of these inaugural initiatives and are already planning improvements to both programs for Town Day 2024.

## Plastics Reductions Subcommittee



**Arlington On Tap** - In response to the single use plastic water bottle ban, we launched the Arlington On Tap campaign to make us all aware of the high quality of our tap water and increase its availability in Arlington's busiest outdoor spaces..

Zero Waste Arlington continues its partnership with the Town of Arlington to build out a network of outdoor water refill stations. With the upcoming summer 2024 activation of the new water refill station at East Arlington's **Thorndike Field** and another expected at the **Arlington Reservoir** in Arlington Heights, the *Arlington on Tap* network will encompass four outdoor water refill stations with at least one station in each Arlington district. The **Hurd Field** refill station (off the Arlington Heights bike path behind Trader Joe's) was installed last spring and the Arlington Center **Swan Place** refill station (near Kickstand Cafe) was repaired last year.



*Hurd field water filling station*

Our website has an interactive [map](#) with locations of all the indoor and outdoor water filling stations in Arlington.

## Legislative Subcommittee

Our legislative subcommittee closely tracks waste reduction legislation at the State House, keeps the committee abreast on the status of the bills, and will mobilize support for particular issues agreed upon by the full Committee, as appropriate. This work involves outreach to legislators that represent Arlington, but also those from other districts that sit on key committees or are part of the Zero Waste Caucus. Our subcommittee also liaises with waste-focused groups in other municipalities, state agencies, and beyond.

We brought the resolution supporting Extended Producer Responsibility and Bottle Bill Legislation to Spring 2023 Town Meeting, which passed with overwhelming support 170/11 showing strong support in Arlington for this legislation.

We have been active this year in advocating for a state-wide paint stewardship program that would establish a convenient network for the collection and repurposing of used and discarded architectural paint, both from commercial and residential establishments. This is a no cost initiative for cities and towns that will provide convenience for our residents and benefits for the environment.

We have also been advocating with our state legislators for the passage of an updated Bottle Bill, which would increase the redemption fee from 5 to 10 cents, add non-carbonated juice, sports drinks and tea containers, and increase the handling fees paid to retail stores and redemption centers.

## Outreach & Education

**Reducing single-use restaurant waste:** ZWA is partnering with the Chamber of Commerce, DPCD's Economic Development Coordinator, and DPW's Charlotte Milan to engage with Arlington restaurants in efforts to reduce their waste. In the fall of 2023, ZWA committee members spoke with every eatery in Arlington (~70 establishments) to gather data on single-use dine-in and takeout waste practices. We found that 58% of restaurants only give takeout extras (utensils, napkins, condiment packs, etc.) when requested. This practice aligns with the 'Skip the Stuff' campaign which is gaining national traction in places such as New York City, as well as locally in places like Newton and Swampscott. As part of our outreach, we also found that of restaurants that offer dine-in, 68% are using reusable plates, cups, and silverware for dine-in. ***Our goal for 2024 is to partner with restaurants that have higher single-use waste practices to help them find ways to reduce their waste.***

**Restaurant Composting Pilot:** In 2023, Town Meeting passed Article 56 which was brought to the body by Ottoson Middle School students. The warrant article proposed an allocation of \$5,000 to subsidize the collection of compost for Arlington eating establishments. This spring, ZWA has been working with the Town of Arlington to identify prospective restaurants. In mid-April, consultant CET (Center for EcoTechnology) provided onsite waste audits at 8 eating establishments and discussed the logistics of the composting pilot. The 8 establishments that had the waste audit were: BreadBoard Bakery, Barismo, Brickstone Pizza, Donut Villa, Roasted Granola, Quebrada, Quilo's Tacqueria and Thai Moon. The team hopes that six of these establishments will sign up for the composting pilot this month. The pilot will be free for 3 months.

**Website:** In July 2022 we launched our website [zerowastearlington.org](https://zerowastearlington.org). The committee hired a professional web designer to support us in the effort, and all content and organization was written and planned by the committee members. The website is regularly updated with events, blog posts, and campaign news. Google analytics tracks usage and we have seen **2,300 users** browse through the pages of the site since launch.

**Social Media:** We actively manage the The [ZWA Facebook page](#), posting relevant content at regular intervals. As of April 2024 we have 990 followers, up from 889 followers 12 months ago. Our primary means of communicating more formal announcements with the ZWA community is through our Google group, which currently has over 400 participants.

**Webinar Series:** This year our focus has been on our social media and outreach to restaurants but we hope to pick up our webinar series *Earth to Arlington: Let's Talk Trash* in the near future..

**Additional Outreach:** In the post-pandemic world, we have resumed face-to-face tabling events and have had extensive conversations with Arlington residents at Town Day, Arlington Resources Fair, Arlington Heights Spring Fling, and plan to continue these conversations at the Farmer's Market this summer. We are also making an effort to stay connected with other organizations like Mothers Out Front, Plastics Free MA, Lexington Zero Waste to look for opportunities to partner in outreach efforts.

# Solid Waste Statistics

In CY 2023 Arlington diverted **429,320 lbs** of textile through the Bay State Textile recycling program earning Arlington schools **\$24,738**. Additionally Arlington’s contractor, Republic Services, hauled **10,900 tons** of municipal solid waste (MSW) to the Wheelabrator incineration plant in North Andover, and **4,837 tons** of recyclable items from our blue bins/barrels/carts to its Greenworks material recovery facility (MRF) in Peabody for sorting, baling, and sale. **3,390 tons** of yard waste was also diverted. The textiles diverted increased as also the recyclable items and the trash tonnage was down from last calendar year.



The monthly Reuse & Recycling Center (R&RC) continues to be popular, bringing in hard to recycle, less incineration-friendly items such as large/bulky rigid plastic, Styrofoam, electronics, and scrap metal. The R&RC collects books, and is continuing the successful Swap Shed launched in 2021. **Everyone should utilize the Reuse & Recycling Center to help Arlington increase its diversion rate!**